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SUBJECT: MALIAN MUSLIMS PEACEFULLY PROTEST AGAINST DUTCH
FILM

1.(U) On April 5 in Bamako an estimated 1,500 Malian Muslims staged a peaceful protest against the release of the film Fitna by the right-wing Dutch politician Geert Wilders. The march was authorized by the Malian government and organized by Mohamed Kimbiri, a well-known conservative Imam. "The entire Muslim community of Mali," said Kimbiri before the crowd, "actively condemns such irresponsible and provocative behavior that tarnishes the dignity of Muslims around the world."

2.(SBU) While politically active, Kimbiri is avowedly non-violent and open to other points of view. He is one of the Malian Muslim community's principal organizers and usually able to turn out several hundred protestors. A number of veiled women who participated in the April 5 protest appeared ill-informed as to the purpose of the march and asked a Malian member of the Embassy staff who was observing the procession to explain what the demonstration was about. Kimbiri has traveled to the U.S. as the recipient of an International Visitor's grant, and while up front in his criticism of U.S. policy toward the Middle East, remains favorably disposed toward the U.S. As he has done in the past, Kimbiri called the Embassy prior to the march to inform the Embassy of his intent to organize a peaceful protest. Wahhabis constitute a sizable minority of Malian Muslims. As with other forms of Islam in Mali, however, Wahhabism is not as exclusionary in Mali as it is in other countries.
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